



# National Museum of Health and Medicine

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## Otis Historical Archives

### Sherman A. Minton Collection OHA 241.05

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**Biographical Note:** Dr. Sherman A. Minton Jr. was born on 24 February 1919 in New Albany, Indiana. The son of Gertrude and Sherman Minton Sr., a state senator and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, young Minton was interested in reptiles and amphibians and intended to become a herpetologist. However, Minton's father required that he study either law or medicine. After graduating Indiana University in 1939 with a degree in zoology, Minton went on to the University's School of Medicine, graduating in 1942. While at Indiana, Minton met his future wife, Madge Rutherford, whom he married in 1943. Madge was also a naturalist and their marriage was a true partnership, as they both collaborated in the field and coauthored numerous publications.

During World War II, but after completing medical school, Minton was sent to San Diego and later, assigned to the *USS Brooks*. He was aboard the ship in January 1944 when she participated in the invasion of Luzon Island in the Philippines and was hit by a Japanese kamikaze plane. In his later years, Minton worked to document the history of the ship, her crew, and that of the HMAS *Warramunga*, the Australian destroyer that rescued the *Brooks* and her crew. Upon his return and reassignment to the San Diego Naval Hospital, Minton began to experience what would now be called post-traumatic stress, including combat flashbacks. He began drinking heavily and taking various prescription drugs. After an accidental overdose, the Navy discharged Minton and he returned to Indiana with Madge and their daughter, Brooks.

Minton decided to pursue graduate work in herpetology and microbiology at the University of Michigan. He returned to the University of Indiana in 1948, working in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. He conducted extensive research into the snake species of Indiana, as well as other fauna.



Minton worked with other naturalists in the area, and his circle of professional colleagues grew to include herpetologists and venom experts from all over the world. At the University, Minton continued to teach medical microbiology to students. In 1957, Minton travelled to Costa Rica on a tropical medicine fellowship, where he studied parasitology but found time to spend on the study of local reptiles.

One year later, Minton was invited to be the microbiologist in a program between Indiana University and the newly-independent Pakistan. He accepted and Minton, Madge, and their three daughters left for Pakistan for the two-year post. Minton's medical work was focused on diseases in the local populace, including cholera, malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, and smallpox. As usual, Minton found time for researching local herpetological fauna and starting a venom research program, as well as collecting snakes for American colleagues, zoos, and universities.

The Minton family returned to Indiana in 1961. Despite their initial culture shock, Minton resumed teaching and he and Madge continued to travel during the next three decades. They attended conferences and joined research groups studying venomous animals in South America, China, Japan, the Caribbean, Indonesia, Australia, eventually retracing Minton's World War II steps to Manila and then back to Pakistan in the early 1980s.

Minton retired from teaching in 1984. By that time, he was considered a pioneer in the field of herpetology, toxicology, and treatment for snakebites, with a particular expertise in the species of Indiana and Pakistan. Among his notable publications were *Amphibians & Reptiles of Indiana* (1972, 2001), *Venomous Reptiles* (1969), and *Giant Reptiles* (1973), the latter two coauthored with his wife. Minton wrote more than 200 scientific and popular articles throughout his career. He spent much of his time working with children, fostering their interests in natural history, including scout troops and 4-H groups and the occasional child who simply stopped by to see Minton and Madge's snake collection.

The Mintons were active into the 1990s and as leaders in the field of herpetology, they were invited to speak all over the world. In 1998, Minton fell ill during a trip to Vietnam and did not recover upon his return to the United States. Subsequent doctor's appointments diagnosed cancer with little hope of treatment. He died on 15 July 1999 and at the time of his death there were five taxa, herpetological species native to Pakistan, named for Sherman and Madge Minton.

*Adapted from Life, Love, and Reptiles: an Autobiography of Sherman A. Minton Jr. M.D. (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2001)*

**Series/Scope and Content Note:** This collection documents many aspects of Sherman Minton's life. His wartime experience is heavily represented, especially his time on the *USS Brooks*, and his subsequent research into her history. In addition to military orders, materials from this period include wartime correspondence between Madge and Sherman, photographs, and ephemera. Also included are diplomas and certificates received between 1940 and 1994, and some school notes, including a bacteriology notebook. Most of Minton's major publications are represented, including his three books and autobiography, as well scientific publications (1954-2002), magazine articles (1951-1983), and articles about or featuring Minton (1971-1983).



## BOX AND CONTENT LIST

### SERIES 001: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND MILITARY

#### Box 001

- 00001: Biographical Information, 1958-1987
- 00002: Navy records: orders, correspondence, and Veteran's Affairs material, 1942-1969, nd
- 00003: Wedding invitation for Madge Alice Rutherford and Sherman Minton, Jr., 10 October 1943
- 00004: Wartime correspondence between Madge and Sherman Minton, and with their families, 1941-1945
- 00005: Photographs of Madge and Sherman Minton, 1941-1945
- 00006: Crew photographs aboard the *USS Brooks*, 1943-1944
- 00007: Photographs of the *USS Brooks*, including the Luzon Island invasion and kamikaze attack, 1944
- 00008: Postcard photographs of many US ships, written by Bob to Helen Shortbridge, 1941-1945
- 00009: Japanese currency and US military coupons, 1944
- 00010: Coupons for Officer's mess (Love Field, Texas) and Officer's club (Milne Bay, New Guinea). *Army Song Book*, 1941. Friday Nite Dance Pass, 21 February 1941
- 00011: Record (45rpm) seized from a Japanese fishing boat, 1944
- 00012: Drawing of Sherman Minton done on base in California, 1930
- 00013: Research about the *USS Brooks*
- 00014: Oral history correspondence, 1991
- 00015: Profile of Madge Minton, *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, Fall 1991
- 00016: *World War II Times* newspaper, May 1988, April - May 1999, June - July 1999
- 00017: Magazine and news clippings (relevance unknown), 1919, 1945, 1949



00018: Program for July 4<sup>th</sup> dinner, US Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Virginia [owned by E.V. Rutherford, grandfather of Madge Minton], 1919

## **SERIES 002: EDUCATION, CERTIFICATES, AND LETTERS**

00019: Diplomas and certificates, 1940-1994

00020: Letters, 1968, 1983, nd

00021: Culture sheets, Bacteriology 111A, notebook, 1940s (?)

## **SERIES 003: PUBLICATIONS**

00022: Scientific Publications, 1954-1958

- Polyvalent Antivenin in the Treatment of Experimental Snake Venom Poisoning (1954)
- Salamanders of the *Ambystoma jeffersonianum* complex in Indiana (1954)
- Some Health Problems for the Medical Zoologist in the "Big Bend" Country (1955)
- A New Snake of the Genus *Tontilla* from West Texas (1956)
- Another Indiana Record of *Lemophora coccinea* and a note on egg-eating (1958)

00023: Scientific Publications, 1962-1977

- An Annotated Key to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Sind and Las Bela, West Pakistan (1962)
- Feeding Habits of the Kukri Snake *Oligodon taeniolatus* (1963)
- Poisonous Snakes of the World ONI (1964)
- The Poisonous Snakes of the World: Activities and Antigencity of Venoms, Treatment of Snake Bite (1964)
- A New Dwarf Gecko (*Tropicolotes*) from Baluchistan (1965)
- Amphibians and Reptiles (1966)
- Observations on toxicity and Antigenic Makeup of Venoms from Juvenile Snakes (1966)
- Zur Fortpflanzung von *Sceloporus farmosus* (Reptilia Iguanidae) (1968)
- The Fate of Amphibians and Reptiles in a Suburban Area (1968)
- Antigenical Relationships of the Venom of *Atractaspis microlepidota* to that of other snakes (1968)
- Venoms of Desert Animals (1968)
- The Feeding Strike of the Timber Rattlesnake (1969)
- Identification of Poisonous Snakes (1970)
- Serological Relationships among some Colubrid Snakes (1972)



00024: Scientific Publications, 1982- 2002

- Highlights in Herpetology: It's Not All Snakes (1982)
- Agkistrodon Piscivorus Leucostoma (Western Cottonmouth) (1983)
- Reptiles as a Source of Human Infections (1992)
- Poisonous Snakes of a War Zone I: Vipers of the Middle East (1990)
- Poisonous Snakes of a War Zone II: Cobras, Sea Snakes and others (1990)
- Venomous bites by nonvenomous snakes: an annotated bibliography of colubrid envenomation (1990)
- Bites by non-native venomous snakes in the United States (1996)
- Conopsis Nasus (Largenose Earth Snake) Reproduction (1998)
- Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana (2002)

00025: Scientific Publications, undated

- Snake bite in the Midwestern region
- Seriological Relationships among some Midwestern Snakes
- Observations on the Snakes of Querétoro, Mexico
- Clinical Hemostatic Disorders caused by Venoms/photocopy
- Some Properties of North American Pit Viper Venoms and their Correlation with Phylogeny
- Variation in venom Samples from Copperheads and Timber Rattlesnakes

00026: Clinical Toxicology Volume 3 Number 3, Symposium: Snake Venoms and Envenomation, Official Journal of the American Academy of Clinical Toxicology (1970)

00027: Magazine articles by Minton, 1951-1983

00028: *Venomous Reptiles* by Sherman A. Minton and Madge Rutherford Minton, 1969

00029: *Giant Reptiles* by Sherman A. Minton Jr. and Madge Rutherford Minton, 1973

00030: *Life, Love, and Reptiles: an Autobiography of Sherman A. Minton Jr. M.D.*, 2001

00031: *Amphibians & Reptiles of Indiana* by Sherman A. Minton Revised Second Edition, 2001

00032: Articles about or featuring Minton, 1971-1983

- *Star Magazine* (1971), *Animal Kingdom* (1983), *The Indianapolis News* (1977), *UNE News* (1980), *Arkansas Gazette* (1979), *The Indianapolis Star* (1984), *NA Iribiene* (1973), *The Republic* (1983)